



# *Planning Your Ribbon Cutting or Groundbreaking Ceremony*

## **OVERVIEW**

Congratulations! Your ribbon cutting or groundbreaking represents an important day for your business. This guide is designed to help you plan your ceremony with an overall checklist, followed by details explaining each section. Please keep in mind that every business is different, so not all details will apply.

There are no hard-and-fast rules - apply your imagination and tailor your event to fit your unique business.

## **CHECKLIST**

✓ **Set your date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (See details, page 3)

✓ **Set your rain date:** \_\_\_\_\_

✓ **Invitations** (See details, page 3)

- Design invitations
- Prepare guest list
- Deadline to get invitations to printer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Items to include with invitations: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date to mail/e-mail/fax invitations: \_\_\_\_\_
- Designate a contact for RSVPs: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date to call or send reminders: \_\_\_\_\_

✓ **Emcee:** \_\_\_\_\_ (See details, page 3)

- Guest speakers: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

✓ **Activities Planned** (See details, page 4)

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✓ **Plan the details of your ceremony and design the program** (See details, page 4)

## ***Planning Your Ribbon Cutting or Groundbreaking Ceremony***

√ **Media** (See details, page 4)

- Prepare press release
- Date to contact local media: \_\_\_\_\_

√ **Materials Needed** \_\_\_\_\_ (See details, page 5)

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√ **Select and contact event staff** (See details, page 5)

- Caterer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Photographer/Videographer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Florist: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

√ **Designate coordinators for tasks** (See details, page 5)

- Set Up: \_\_\_\_\_
- Giveaways/Door Prizes: \_\_\_\_\_
- Parking Assistants: \_\_\_\_\_
- Photographer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Greeters/Ushers: \_\_\_\_\_
- VIP Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tour Guides: \_\_\_\_\_
- Music: \_\_\_\_\_
- Thank Departing Guests: \_\_\_\_\_
- Name Tags: \_\_\_\_\_
- Take Down: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ribbon & Scissors: \_\_\_\_\_
- Cleanup: \_\_\_\_\_
- Shovels: \_\_\_\_\_

√ **Post-event tasks** (See details, page 6)

- Send thank-you notes
- Post photo and information on Web site, newsletters, etc.

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## *Details*

### **SET YOUR DATE**

- ✓ **Select a date several weeks in advance.** Experience shows that events planned for Monday through Friday garner the best attendance and enable officials, dignitaries and Chamber Ambassadors to attend. In general, events between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. often receive the most media coverage.
- ✓ **Check for schedule conflicts with other events** - i.e., Chamber of Commerce and Lakeway community calendars, etc. You may also encourage maximum attendance by holding your event in conjunction with another scheduled community event.
- ✓ **If your location is under construction, consult your construction team when setting the date.**

### **INVITATIONS**

- ✓ **If planning an outdoor event,** choose an alternative date or location in case of inclement weather.
- ✓ **Plan the type of invitation:** formal letter, informal letter, postcard, e-mail or flier. Include your logo and name, the type of event, date and time, address and a method for the recipients to RSVP. You may also include your business card and a map, if appropriate.
- ✓ **Consider additional methods of getting the word out,** such as signs, marquees, Web sites, newsletters or posters. Mail your invitations two to four weeks before the event, and establish a cut-off date for RSVPs, usually about one week before the event.
- ✓ **Designate a contact person and method of contact to handle incoming questions and track RSVPs as they are returned.** You may want to phone or send e-mail reminders a few days before the event.
- ✓ **Your guest list** can include many varied individuals, from your family and friends to staff; clients; business associates such as bankers, advisors and other professionals; neighboring businesses; volunteer associations; community leaders; elected officials; and the media.

### **EMCEE/SPEAKERS**

- ✓ **Choose an emcee to welcome your guests and introduce any other speakers.** He or she may also offer a few remarks, thank appropriate persons and recognize VIPs in attendance who will not be speaking.
- ✓ **If you plan to include guest speakers,** contact them early so they have enough time to prepare remarks and tell them how long they will have to speak. This is typically very brief (two to three minutes). Call to confirm their attendance approximately one week prior to the event.

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### **PLAN ACTIVITIES**

- ✓ **You may decide to hold a traditional ribbon cutting or groundbreaking ceremony, with one or a few brief speeches.** You may wish to include other activities, such as tours of your facility, exhibits, recognition of dignitaries, music or other entertainment, a raffle or refreshments. You may also want to have brochures available or a handout of frequently asked questions and answers about your business.
- ✓ **If you plan to conduct tours,** choose your tour guides in advance, or have a self-guided tour with signs or handouts to direct event attendees.
- ✓ Provide safety items such as hard hats or goggles if necessary and secure or rope off any unsafe areas.
- ✓ If you want to include exhibits, consider posters, blueprints, a scale model or a large map of your facility.
- ✓ Refreshments can be simple or elaborate, and are usually determined by the time of day when your event is held.

### **YOUR CEREMONY AND PROGRAM**

- ✓ **The actual ceremony is usually brief (about 20 to 30 minutes)** and should be planned ahead of time with regard to speaker order, the actual ribbon cutting or groundbreaking and any other activities you plan to include.
- ✓ **Ribbon cutting** - Decide who will cut the ribbon and notify them in advance. Have the cutter (and any other attendees you desire) stand. They should face the audience with the ribbon between them and the audience.
- ✓ **Groundbreaking** - Stage those involved and have a photographer or volunteer ready with a camera. You may want to have the audience do a countdown to the actual cutting or groundbreaking.

### **MEDIA**

- ✓ The Chamber of Commerce, local newspapers and radio stations should be contacted about two weeks in advance.
- ✓ After the event, send a photo to local newspapers and also consider posting it on your Web site and in any relevant newsletters.

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### **MATERIALS NEEDED**

√ Ribbon Cutting - The Chamber of Commerce can loan you large scissors and ribbon. For a groundbreaking ceremony, we can loan you gold-colored ceremonial shovels.

√ Other materials you may need will depend on the scale of your event and the planned activities. For example, if you have speakers, you may need a podium, microphone and chairs. You may also include decorations and flowers, a large display flag, a welcome sign, name tags and a guest book for people to sign as they enter.

√ If you serve food, determine the number of tables, linens and trash cans needed and their placement.

√ Plan the setup of any A/V equipment you will be using and be sure that if you are not hiring a photographer or videographer, you have someone ready with a camera to capture your big moment.

### **SELECT AND CONTACT EVENT STAFF**

√ Your event can be as simple or elaborate as you choose. Among the professionals you may want to involve are a caterer, a photographer/videographer and a florist. Be sure to contact them early - as soon as you have established the date, time and budget - and call to reconfirm your plans one week before the event.

### **DESIGNATE COORDINATORS FOR TASKS**

√ To ensure that your event goes smoothly, be sure that everyone knows their tasks in advance. If you have a guest book, you may want a greeter to oversee this so each guest signs it upon arrival.

√ If you offer tours, indicate a definite spot for interested persons to gather, and brief your tour guides in advance so they can answer visitors' questions quickly and accurately.

### **POST-EVENT TASKS**

√ Be sure to follow up with thank-you notes to all of your speakers, sponsors and other VIPs who attended, as well as your faithful staff.

√ Consider sharing your photos/videos by posting them online, including them in your newsletter or using any other appropriate means of getting your news out.